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By-Tanis, Norman E.
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This paper deals with the place of religion in the curriculum of the junior college, with due regard for the constitutional separation of church and state. For the author's purpose, religion is defined as "that group of concepts ... of theology that have shaped our Western culture ... and the non-Christian world." One semester could deal with the Judeo-Christian heritage and a second with Eastern religions, with a view to teaching the student to understand them, to develop critical, imaginative, and incisive reactions to the facts of history, and to be emotionally and intellectually equipped to cope with and tolerate the differences as he encounters them in our pluralistic society. Nearly all academic subjects (sociology, psychology, history, philosophy, and especially music, art, and literature) treat religion peripherally. Many of their themes are incomprehensible without an understanding of their contemporary religious influences. The author recommends that a course in religion should (1) instruct the student first in our prevalent Judeo-Christian tradition; (2) provide critical tools to evaluate the pagan, the Christian, and the naturalistic scientific mind; (3) include a study of primitive religions and such other great theologies as Buddhist, Hindu, and Islamic; and (4) relate this learning to art and literature, to modern institutions and practices, and to religion's role in various societies and historical periods. (HH)

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RELIGIOUS COURSES IN THE CURRICULUM OF THE PUBLICLY SUPPORTED JUNIOR COLLEGE

By

Norman E. Tanis

Division Head of Library Services

Henry Ford Community College

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The place of religion in the curriculum of the junior college is not a subject which evokes the calm and dispassionate consideration that the adding of just another general education course might. Jefferson's statement that the Constitution had built "a wall of separation between Church and State," has found wide and uncritical acceptance in America. Although such recent conferences as the First National Consultative Conference on Religion and the State University, held at the University of Michigan, November, 1958, have done much to remove the hesitancy which has plagued educators investigating religion as a part of the curriculum, the fear of opening a Pandora's Box is still with us.[1]

I submit that much of the fear and confusion surrounding this topic results from our reluctance to define what is meant by the term "religion." It is an unhappy fact that the need for careful definition is often lost in a labyrinth of considerations involving religious pluralism, Church-State separation, student religious activities, and judicial decisions on the First Amendment.

A careful analysis of what is meant by the term religion in the context of this article, first of all, involves a rejection of several uses of the word, religion, which our society has seen fit to assign to it. As anyone knows, it takes a great deal of unwrapping to find the Egyptian in the mummy case.

I do not mean by the word, "religion," the mystical act of worship which may often be the consequence of a church service ~~or~~ cr private devotions. This kind of religious experience, although it may be important and valid for an individual, has no place in the curriculum of the publicly supported junior college. Nor does the teaching of a course which will tend to evoke this experience have a place in such a junior college. This kind of religious experience must be left to the home and the church. The well-worn principle of rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's is appropriate here.

Neither do I suggest that the junior college set out to propagate a doctrine or set of doctrines in its course in religion. A publicly supported junior college must be secular in the sense that it does not put its

official approval on any religious world-view or, for that matter, any irreligious view.

Thirdly, I do not mean to suggest by the term "religion" a group of ideas about man and his relationship to God which will produce moral men and women fit to serve as the backbone of our society. Unhappily, such organizations as the Division of Christian Education of the Protestant Council of the City of New York are on very dangerous ground, indeed, when they suggest that children who receive no religious instruction become a menace to society and to our country's future. If the publicly supported junior college put forward shallow irenicisms or common denominator theologies calculated to stimulate and nourish the moral fiber of students, it is guilty of teaching a certain ultimate creed. The liklihood of obtaining agreement upon what doctrines would make up such a creed is rather small, anyway. Our pluralistic society is indeed a bar to any such effort. Further, there is little doubt that the separation principle can be restated in terms of private liberty to mean that no public institution may propagate a single doctrine and discriminate against any other ultimate commitment. To look upon a "democratic creed" as a construct or a function does not make it any less an infallible metaphysic.

What I mean to suggest by the term "religion" in this context is that group of concepts or systems of theology which have shaped our western culture and, secondly, those religious systems which have shaped the non-Christian world. One such course in religion would limit itself to the Judaeo-Christian heritage. A second semester continuation might deal with the origin and development of the eastern religions. One could teach these concepts to indoctrinate, to produce commitments to them, to extend the content of these concepts, to derive direction for personal conduct, or, simply, to understand them. It is this latter aim which I think proper and valid as a goal in placing the study of religion in the curriculum of the junior college.

The task of such courses in religion would be to develop a sensitivity to certain kinds of problems and an understanding of possible methods of solution. To put it another way, these courses would develop critical,

imaginative, and incisive reactions to the facts of history. Like any general education course, it would not seek to find a valid method whereby the problems that arose could be solved. Such courses should be objective and scholarly. Such opposite thinkers as Reinhold Niebuhr and the experimentalist Vivian T. Thayer agree that this essentially secular approach to religion can strengthen our pluralistic society.[2]

I

The arguments for the inclusion of religion in the curriculum of the junior college are closely related to the contemporary crisis of western civilization and the social upheaval in America. Norman Cousins makes the point in Who Speaks for Man? that the new education must be concerned less with sophistication and more with compassion. The new education "must teach man the most difficult lesson of all: to look at someone anywhere in the world and be able to see the image of himself."[3] The old emphasis upon superficial differences must give way to education for an understanding citizenship in the "human community."

On the American scene, junior colleges must concern themselves with equipping students intellectually and emotionally to understand and cope with differences. The need is as great for terminal students as it is for college transfer students. Religious pluralism is a fact of the Twentieth Century American society. The legitimate right of every human being to be different is granted us in the Constitution.

All this means that to minimize or forego areas of knowledge in the junior college curriculum which marshall rich insights into the various religious traditions is to invite disaster. Rapid population shifts in America have brought people of different backgrounds and faiths into close proximity. Old value systems are weakening under the impact of social change. America evinces too many examples of community disorganization and tension. Junior colleges should be engaged in helping students to see the need for continuing reappraisal of the suitability of existing institutions. At the same time, students must be confronted with the need in national life for freedom of inquiry, speech, and assembly. They must learn the importance

of opposing any abridgment of civil liberties. A course in religion, properly taught, should contribute to a tolerance and understanding of divergent points of view. Unlike Gulliver, who, after living with the Houyhnhnms for a time, could not tolerate the presence or smell of fellow Yahoos and was struck with the utmost shame, confusion and horror at seeing them, the student of religion will understand and tolerate his fellow men.

Higher Education for American Democracy: A Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education states the issues convincingly:

> "We need to perceive the rich advantages of cultural diversity. To a provincial mind cultural differences are irritating and frightening in their strangeness, but to a cosmopolitan and sensitive mind they are stimulating and rewarding. They are colorful elaborations of the common humanity of men everywhere. We must develop a deep sensitivity to the emotions, the hopes, and the needs of human beings everywhere and so come to accept, not merely in abstract terms but in concrete forms, the brotherhood and interdependence as well as the individuality of all men."[4]

The decision to offer courses in religion could not be grounded on a sounder educational aim than this. It is clear that people of different faiths and backgrounds must be equipped to confront each other with the disciplined ability to use meaningful terms.

II

Despite the difficulties which such idealistic aims may present to the teacher in the junior college, I am convinced that there is a substantial minority among the students who are willing to give him a hearing. Students in American colleges have been designated 1) hippies, 2) Beat, 3) revolutionists, 4) terribly normal, 5) reluctantly pagen, 6) careful, 7) discontented. In my experience, there is a substantial number who are interested in an honest inquiry into the religious and cultural roots of our society. Our society has been classified as "other directed," "organization men," "status seekers," "the Beat Generation," and a "rootless society." All this may in part be true, but we must not be blind to the fact that no classification or system of classifications sums us or our students in a neat phrase. Of recent years, students have been the subject of these busy classifiers. But behind all these neat classifications and clever journalistic catchwords, the curious

student is still searching. Librarians are in an especially fine position to watch the interests of students. If the books that a substantial minority wish to read are any indication, students are still important members in the "fellowship of the concerned." Unlike the experience of Alice in Wonderland, there can be no grin without a Cheshire cat.

I do not share the pessimism expressed in Philip E. Jacob's report, "Changing Values in College," who suggests that little can be done to change student value patterns in college. I find the more optimistic assessment of David Riesman closer to what I have observed.[5]

III

Whatever the debate may be about the receptivity of students, the choice that junior colleges face is not one of religion or no religion in its classrooms. Religion is being taught in one way or another in almost every junior college in the country. During the whole history of higher education in America, the door has never been closed to religion. Every day, courses in sociology, psychology, history and philosophy are dealing with religion. Music, art, and literature can only be competently taught if the facts about the history and development of religious systems are an aspect of the subject matter. The question that faces one, however, is--does this kind of peripheral treatment meet the needs of the modern student?

The past must be interpreted in its fullness, and that fullness must contain the story of religion. It is obvious that many students, and even many of America's leading intellectuals, are no longer soundly grounded in the essentials of the Judaeo-Christian heritage. We have already seen that religious illiteracy is dangerous for American citizenship as well as for world citizenship. It is also dangerous to expect the religious illiterate to learn and appreciate English literature. Bunyan, Donne, Shakespeare, Milton, Lincoln, and Faulkner are only completely understood when viewed with an intelligent understanding of their Judaeo-Christian heritage. History may not have evolved around the concepts of original sin, consubstantiation, supralapsarianism, but an understanding of history which goes beyond simple memorization of facts must cope with such ideas. Early American history and

the themes which run with variations through the story of American history are incomprehensible to the student who does not understand our religious heritage. H. L. Mencken and James Truslow Adams are notable examples of thinkers who have stumbled over our religious roots. Perry Miller of Harvard, on the other hand, is a shining example of a scholar who found new insights by achieving competency in the study of Puritan theology.

IV

The impetus for learning about our religious heritage is not born in a classroom devoted to minimizing differences or glossing over explicit disagreements. Rightly conceived, the course in religion on the junior college level must concern itself with theology. This does not mean that junior colleges must go into the business of training professional theologians. But it must be concerned with defining terms and understanding differences within the framework and intent of a general education course concerned with one of the humanities. Anthony Nemetz states the intent: ". . . the teacher tries to show the consequences of differing assumptions or principles. Broadly stated, the concern in such courses is with examining the constructed work rather than with constructing a work, and with showing importance of a kind of inquiry rather than creatively engaging in such inquiry."[6] In short, the course must be taught descriptively.

Finally, I can only summarize my considered opinion about the course or courses in religion.

1. I strongly urge that junior college students be introduced first to their own religious tradition. A course in the Judaeo-Christian thought and practice is basic to any other course in religion.

2. It is highly desirable that western religion be presented and evaluated from the point of view of the pagan mind, the Christian mind, and the naturalistic scientific mind. While the development of a point of view by the student is not of first importance, the critical tools for such an endeavor should be presented.

3. It would also be desirable that the junior college student should become familiar with the study of primitive religion and with some of the other great religions of mankind, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. This would probably necessitate a second semester course in religion.

4. Students should be encouraged to relate the learning which these classes stimulate to art and literature. They should observe and evaluate the role religion plays in the institutions and practices of modern men and the role it has played in various societies and historical periods.

1. The Journal of Higher Education, XXX (April, 1959). See also, Erich A. Walter, editor, Religion and the State University (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1958).

2. Reinhold Niebuhr, "A Note on Pluralism," in John Cogley, editor, Religion in America (New York: Meridian, 1958), 44-45. Vivian T. Thayer, "An 'Experimentalist' Position," in F. Ernest Johnson, American Education and Religion: The Problem of Religion in the Schools (New York: Harper, 1952), 35-38.

3. Norman Cousins, Who Speaks for Man? (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 97.

4. A Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education: Higher Education for American Democracy (New York: Harper, 1948), I, 17.

5. David Riesman, "Student Culture and Faculty Values," in Margaret L. Habein, editor, Spotlight on the College Student (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1959), 12-14.

6. Anthony Nemetz, "Religion as an Academic Discipline," The Journal of Higher Education, XXX (April, 1959), 198.